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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: EX-PARTY STRONGMAN RADJABU GETS 13 YEAR SENTENCE

REF: 07 BUJUMBURA 376

11. (U) In an April 3 decision, the Supreme Court sentenced former party president of the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) Hussein Radjabu to 13 years in prison for intent to disrupt state security through armed rebellion and insulting President Nkurunziza (reftel). Police arrested Radjabu in April 2007 after a local radio station broadcast alleged recordings of the former "power behind the throne" encouraging demobilized soldiers to overthrow the government.

The voice on the recordings refers to President Nkurunziza as an "empty bottle." The case was closely followed by the international community, and the court rendered a judgment only one day after the 60 day limit imposed by Burundian law.

Radjabu can appeal the ruling to another chamber of the Supreme Court for a final judgment within thirty days.

12. (SBU) COMMENT: A sentence of 13 years is harsher than most observers expected. After following the highly transparent court case attentively, most media and members of the international community found the prosecution's case weak. Reports from the local community allege that President Nkurunziza's administration used its influence to further sideline the high-profile and divisive Radjabu, at least until the conclusions of elections in 2010. END COMMENT.
MOLLER